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IN THE INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL ORGANIZATIONS
ACTIVITY OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF SOVIET GEOGRAPHERS
(From January 1959 to March 1960)

by M. B. Gornung

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In the International Geographical Organizations
Activity of the National Committee of Soviet Geographers
(From January 1959 to March 1960)

In the interval after the publication of the report on the work of the National Committee of Soviet Geographers in 1958, the activity of the Committee noticeably increased in connection with the approach of the Tenth General Assembly of the International Geographic Union and the Nineteenth International Geographic Congress, which, as is known, will be held at the end of summer this year in Stockholm.

During this period the NKSG (National Committee of Soviet Geographers) held six general sessions and a series of sessions of a bureau of the committee. In these sessions, problems connected with different aspects of the participation of Soviet geographers in the forthcoming congress, in its exhibits, in the work of the MGS (International Geographic Union) commissions and problems of broadening the ties with the national committees of foreign countries and many other problems were discussed.

As also in preceeding years, Soviet geographers were regularly informed on the undertakings conducted along MGS or NKSG lines through this journal. Thus in 1959, a report of the work of NKSG in 1958, materials of MGS information bulletins, information on the program of the Stockholm Congress, etc., were published in them.

In the beginning of 1960 at the Third Congress of the Geographic Society of the USSR, in Kiev, the National Committee had the opportunity of reporting on its activity to the Soviet geographic community. The report made by Academician I. P. Gerasimov, chairman of the NKSG, on the development of international scientific ties and their value for the future progress of Soviet geography received approval at the congress. An abridged text of this report was published in this journal (No 1, 1960).

The preparation of specific measures for the participation of Soviet geographers in the Stockholm Congress began at the end of summer last year when a second circular from the Congress was received in the USSR, defining the composition of the sections, the procedure for participation in the Congress, the date for the presentation of requests for reports, theses, etc. The NKSG set about first of all to select the reports of Soviet scientists. The requests for reports which had been received up to this time by the Committee from different geographic institutions and individual Soviet geographers were considered. In addition, the NKSG requested leaders of the largest geographic institutions in the USSR and a number of the leading geographers working in the different departments (Main Administration of the Hydrometeorological Service under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, The Main Administration of Geodesy and Cartography, the Ministry of Geology and the Conservation of the Natural Resources, and others), to prepare reports for specific sections of the Congress. More than 115 such

proposals were distributed, the majority of which were accepted. After obtaining abstracts of the reports the NKSG organized their scientific review on the basis of which the theses were approved for transmission to Stockholm, and returned to the authors for completion or in certain cases declined. The principal criteria for the selection of the reports were their conformity to the theme of the Congress, originality, and the high scientific value of the material. Some reports were approved because they might be of great interest to the world geographic community as information on the achievements of geographic science in the USSR. The number of rejected abstracts was very small. In almost all cases the rejection of reports was connected with the regional character of their subjects which did not enter into the frame of the Stockholm Congress.

As a result of this work 98 Soviet reports, the theses of which were sent to Stockholm at the end of 1959 for inclusion in the collection being sent to Sweden for the opening of the Congress, were presented to the Organization Committee of the Congress. Some violation of the time for presentation of abstracts was permitted mainly through the fault of the authors of the reports, part of whom permitted serious violations of the period for preparing the abstracts, their volume and format. The non-observance by authors of the rigid time periods established in Stockholm was in particular, the reason that the NKSG could not also present to the Congress a certain number of Soviet reports which in other respects answered the requirements of the Organization Committee and the NKSG. All 98 reports, the abstracts of which were received in Stockholm, are considered as being accepted. The sending of the complete texts of the reports to Sweden was mainly completed in March although even here tardiness in the presentation of certain reports could not be successfully avoided.

The reports of Soviet scientists are represented in all nine sections of the Congress and in the sessions of a number of Commissions of the MGS. They are presented in the following form according to sections: "Geography of Polar and Subpolar Countries" - 10; "Geographic Cartography and Aerial Photography" - 10; "Climatology, Hydrography, Oceanography, and Glaciology" - 24; "Geomorphology" - 19; "Biogeography" - 10; "Geography of Man" - 3; "Economic Geography" - 7; "Methodology and Bibliography" - 6; "Applied Geography" - 6.

The Commission on Periglacial Geomorphology presented two reports, and the Commission on Karst, one. In addition to this, a considerable portion of Soviet Geographers share in the work of the Commission for National Atlases and in the reports of a number of other MGS commissions in which there are Soviet representatives.

The subject of the reports reflects the most important achievements in the USSR in the field of geographical sciences in recent years and at the same time considers the wish of the organizers of the Congress that the foremost place would be occupied by the subject devoted to geographic problems of "polar countries."

The number of the reporters, taking into account coauthors, is somewhat more than the number of reports. They are distributed as follows according to different institutions.

(1) Institutions of the Academy of Sciences USSR, its affiliates and the academies of science of the union republics - 62 persons.

(2) Institutions of the Ministries of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the USSR - 24 persons.

(3) Institutions of other Departments - 16 persons.

The NKSG conducted preparatory measures for the organization of Soviet sections at the exhibits of the Congress. Soviet stands at the main cartographic exhibit propose to show complete or by partial lists all Soviet special subject maps published after 1956. In addition, there will be shown separate maps at the exhibit of the MGS Commission for Population Maps and new Soviet atlases at the exhibit of the MGS Commission for National Atlases. Requests for an exhibition place have already been directed to Sweden and the preparation of materials will be made according to the models of stands approved by the NKSG.

The NKSG has devoted no small amount of attention to the preparation of a number of geographic works, the publication of which was timed for the Nineteenth International Geographic Congress. Among these, a prominent place is occupied by the collection "Soviet Geography", being issued by Geografis [Publishing House of Geographical Literature] in time for the Congress. This collection and other publications prepared for the Congress have already been described in the report mentioned which was given at the congress of the Geographic Society (Izv. AN SSSR, seriya geogr., 1960, No 1).

On the initiative of the NKSG, the departure of a large group of Soviet Geographers to the Congress is specified. In addition to the official USSR delegation, numbering nine persons, a trip to Stockholm along the lines of a scientific tour has been proposed for associates of the academic institutions, professors and teachers of the universities and scientific institutes, workers of the Hydrometeorological Service, and so forth. The number of places provided according to this plan must in any case ensure the possibility of personal participation in the congress to the lecturers who wish to go to Sweden.

During the past period the NKSG has continued to maintain the closest contact with the leadership of the MGS both by means of constant correspondence and by favorable personal meetings with members of the Executive Committee of the MGS. Thus, in May 1959, during the Humboldt jubilee celebration in the German Democratic Republic, members of the NKSG (I. A. Salishchev, M. B. Gornung) met with Professor G. Allmann, president of MGS and Professor C. Harris, vice-president of the union. In November 1959 Professor K. A. Salishchev, deputy chairman of the NKSG visited the president of the MGS in Sweden and had a number of business meetings with the organizers of the Congress and its exhibits. In January and February of this year, Academician I. P. Gerasimov, chairman of the NKSG, had a number of talks on MGS and NKSG matters with Professor C. Harris during his stay in the USSR.

Soviet scientists were nominated as supervisors of some sections of the forthcoming Congress upon the recommendation of the Organization Committee of the Congress. Academician I. P. Gerasimov was approved as chairman of the first section of the Congress. Academician A. A. Grigor'yev, due to ill health was forced to decline the nomination to

become one of the two chairmen of the section on methodology and bibliography, and according to the recommendation of the NKSG, the Organization Committee confirmed the nomination of S. V. Kalesnik, corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences USSR, in this post.

In recognition of the service of Soviet geography and its apparent role in the world of science a Soviet geographer was nominated as a candidate for membership in the new Executive Committee of the MGS which will be selected in Stockholm. The present Executive Committee of the MGS nominated Academician I. P. Gerasimov as a candidate for the post of vice-president of the MGS.

Particular note should be made of the fact that together with the preparatory work for the Conference the National Committee is making thorough preparations for the active participation of USSR representatives in the work of the General Assembly of the MGS. In the work of the MGS, which is determined by its regulations, there are many moments which are not conducive to a sufficient activation of international scientific cooperation of geographers. Thus, for example, is the unsatisfactory activity of a number of scientific commissions of the MGS, the work of which is conducted in reality, without control, and frequently depends only on the energy and interest of the chairman in the work of the commission.

In the National Committee and in the minds of a number of Soviet geographers serious desires arose a long time ago for the improvement of different facets of MGS activities. Preparing these desires in the form of a proposal the NKSG at the regular session of the General Assembly of the MGS, the Committee in 1959 conducted much consultation work in relation to the draft of these solutions with Soviet scientists, with the representatives of other scientific associations, with members of the MGS Executive Committee, with representatives of the National Committee of other countries, and with individual prominent foreign scientists.

Thus, many of these problems were discussed during the above-indicated meetings with the president of the MGS and with members of the Executive Committee, with A. Bart, the representative of the National Committee of the USA who arrived in Moscow at the end of 1959, with prominent scientists in France, Belgium, and Sweden during a 1959 trip to these countries by Academician I. P. Gerasimov and Professor K. A. Salishchev and others. The NKSG informed the National Committees of a number of countries of the people's democracies (Poland, The German Democratic Republic, Hungary, and others) on the basis of their own organizational proposals. These same problems were discussed by the leaders of the National Committees of some of the indicated countries who visited the USSR in 1959 or at the congress of the Geographic Society at the beginning of 1960 (Professor S. Leshchitskiy, Professor Sh. Rado, Professor I. Gellert, and others).

At the end of 1959 the NKSG approved these proposals and sent them to the Executive Committee of the MGS. Problems concerning the composition of the commissions of the MGS and the order of their work occupied a dominant place in the Soviet proposals. Considering the

work of the commissions as the most important form of scientific activity of the MGS in the period between congresses, the NKSG proposed the introduction of changes in the MGS regulations which would contribute to raising the effectiveness and the activities of the commissions. The activity of the commissions during the current formulations of the regulations, as well as their origin and form of work are uncontrolled. The number of commissions, among them ineffective ones not having clear scientific problems or working out too narrow problems, grows, and do not contribute to the solutions of the problems before them, or even to the solution of the most important modern geographic problems for which the international cooperation of scientists is necessary.

The NKSG considers it expedient to formulate a new section of MGS regulations in the part concerning the commissions in which the following desires would be expressed:

- to determine in the General Assembly of the MGS or in the Executive Committee the principle problems and a brief plan of the work of each commission, and also results expected from it;

- to rest the moral responsibility for the success of the work of the commission on its chairman and on the National Committee of that country where it operates, that is to push forward those geographers as leaders of the MGS commissions who in addition to their own high scientific qualifications can be depended on for the scientific-organizational maintenance of the institutions of their own countries;

- to consider it as obligatory for each commission to conduct one to two plenary sessions between congresses with possibly a wider attraction to the plenums of specialists in the problems being studied by the commissions;

- to accept the decision on lengthening the period of activity of a commission and its financing on the part of the MGS depending on its report concerning the fulfillment of earlier an approved MGS work plan and with the presentation of a program for a new period of time;

- to consider it necessary to prepare the staff of the commissions beforehand with compulsory consultations with the National Committees of those countries whose geographers are nominated to the commission, and so forth.

The NKSG expressed concrete desires concerning changes in the staff of the commissions. Supporting the idea of the preservation of a new period for those commissions which justified themselves by successful scientific work, the NKSG at the same time spoke out for the reorganization of a number of commissions and even for the liquidation of some of them. The NKSG also proposed the creation of a new Commission for Economic-Geographic Regioning in the MGS. Polish geographers came forward with a similar proposal for the creation of such a commission.

Besides the problem concerning commissions, the NKSG proposed the introduction of a supplement to the regulations in relation to the regional geographic conferences of the MGS. Emerging from the experience

of the successful conduct of two such conferences (Uganda, 1955; Japan, 1957), the Committee proposed to supplement the MGS regulations with a section which would give the right to National Committees of one or of several countries to create MGS regional Conferences under the chairmanship of the president or vice president of the MGS in the period between congresses. Such conferences open to the geographers of all countries would permit large groups of scientists, of a specific geographic region, to gather for the discussion of regional problems to which an adequate place could not be allotted to the world-wide congresses.

All of the desires of the NKSG were discussed by the Executive Committee of the MGS at the beginning of 1960. Our propositions, requiring changes in the MGS regulations, must be transmitted to the Special Committee of the MGS for Revision of Regulations, which will gather in Stockholm for preparing a draft of the revised regulations for the Twentieth Congress. The concrete proposals for the composition of the commissions are being presented at the General Assembly. According to these and certain other Soviet proposals the possibility has been opened for the projection at the General Assembly, of a program which has already been determined and fundamentally takes into consideration our proposals and the proposals of other countries (see: information in this number of the periodical).

In 1959, the NKSG continued giving the necessary assistance to the Soviet scientists who were staff members of MGS commissions. Activities of the Commission on National Atlases progressed successfully under the chairmanship of Prof K. A. Salishchev. The conference held by this Commission in 1958 in Moscow brought about numerous favorable comments abroad, particularly in the press, and contributed to maintaining the high level of activity of the Commission. At the end of 1959, the main portion of the scientific report of the Commission which was in the form of a monograph under the editorship of Prof K. A. Salishchev on the history of national atlases, their problems and methods of compilation, was sent to the Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences USSR for publication. Other materials for a congress of this Commission are being prepared by a number of European countries. At the end of 1959, the chairman of this Commission completed a trip to these countries (Poland, Sweden, Belgium and France) where he met with members of the Commission on the problem of the general report of the Commission and organization of the exhibition of this Commission for the forthcoming Congress.

Active participation in the work of the Commission on Periglacial Geomorphology was shown by K. K. Markov who attended the plenary meeting of this Commission in Morocco in October 1959. He is directing the preparation of a collection of Soviet works on the subject field of the Commission and edits the Asia and Antarctica Divisions of the world map of periglacial phenomena, the compilation of which is the basic portion of the work of the Commission.

The NKSG, through its own appeal to the administration of the Commissions of Medical Geography and Arid Zones, achieved a certain change in the operation of the commissions and the establishment of direct contact with Soviet scientists who were selected for these commissions. No changes occurred in the other commissions. At the beginning of 1960, Docent A. M. Ryabchikov was elected Corresponding-Member of the Commission of the MGS on Humid Tropic Regions and, obviously, could also participate in the work of this Commission in Stockholm.

It has already been noted above that in past period the NKSG not only had constant contact with the administration of the MGS but also strengthened the ties between the National Committees of other countries. In addition to the exchange of information between National Committees of countries of the people's democracy which are members of the MGS (Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) or those contemplating membership (Bulgaria and Rumania), in 1959 direct contact was established with the National Committee of Geographers of the USA. Through the initiative of the latter, a member of this Committee, Doctor A. Bart, came to Moscow at the end of 1959. He familiarized members of the Bureau of the NKSG with the make-up of the American committee, discussed problems with them on the possible means of developing contacts between geographers of the USA and the USSR and particularly on the exchange of information concerning the preparations of both countries for the forthcoming Stockholm Congress. The National Committee of the

USSR, in developing this initiative, had sent to the USA at the beginning of 1960 a complete list of the Soviet reports designated for the Congress in order to facilitate the preparation of American colleagues for the scientific discussion.

A great step in the development of scientific contacts with the geographers of the USA was the signing of the agreement between the USSR and the USA on exchanges in the fields of science, engineering, education and culture in which provisions are made for the exchange of delegations of geographers in groups of four to six members from each country for a three to four week period in 1960-1961. Correspondence on this problem were completed with the meeting between Academician I. P. Gerasimov and Prof Ch. Harris who are authorized by the corresponding organizations of both countries (Academy of Sciences USSR for the Soviet Union and the Association of American Geographers for the USA) to define a specific plan for this exchange of geographic delegations. Such a plan has been submitted for study by both countries.

Among the other activities of the NKSG over the past period which were not connected directly with the MGS, mention should be made of the constant contact with International Council on the Study of the Geography of Africa and Asia which is located in Aligarh (India). Up to now the operation of this organization is developing slowly. At present preparations are being made for publication of the second volume of the bulletin of this organization for which the NKSG prepared a number of informational and bibliographical materials in 1959. It is expected that the forthcoming Second International Geographic Seminar on Africa and Asia will be held in one of the African countries.

The National Committee actively participated in organizing trips abroad for individual Soviet geographers in 1959 (International Conference on Economic Regioning in Poland, the celebration of the Humboldt Jubilee in the German Democratic Republic, participation of Soviet Scientists in meetings of commissions of the MGS and so forth). As in preceding years, the NKSG fulfilled various requests and inquiries of individual Soviet and foreign scientists and geographical institutions.

In 1960 the main tasks of the NKSG will be the completion of all preparations for participation in the Congress and General Assembly of the MGS, active work in the course of these important international geographical projects and organization of a detailed scientific report of these operations for wide circles of Soviet Geographers.

INFORMATION

on the program of the Tenth General Assembly of the MGS

In accordance with the MGS Regulations at the beginning of March of this year the program for the Tenth General Assembly of the MGS, prepared by the Executive Committee of the MGS which takes into consideration the desires of the National Committees, was sent to all the National Committees of countries belonging to the MGS.

Sessions of the Assembly will be held twice in the course of the Stockholm Congress, on the opening day and on the closing day. The following 17 points are included in the program:

- (1) Introductory speech by the president of the MGS;
- (2) Designation of speakers on problems of the program and the selection of an inspection commission (special finance committee);
- (3) Report of the Secretary-Treasurer (General Secretary of the MGS) for the period from 1956-1960;
- (4) Presentation of the finance report for 1956-1960;
- (5) Presentation of the draft of the budget for 1960-1964;
- (6) Selections of the Executive Committee of the MGS for the period from 1960-1964;
- (7) Report on the interrelations between the MGS and the International Cartographic Association which was founded in 1959;
- (8) On the staff of commissions for 1960-1964 and on the designation of the chairmen of the commissions;
- (9) Report of the special commission on the discussion of regulations on completed work;
- (10) Induction of new members into the MGS;
- (11) Proposals concerning the review of regulations for discussion at the Eleventh General Assembly of the MGS in 1964;
- (12) Report of the inspection committee on the finance report for 1956-1960 and the proposed budget for 1960-1964;
- (13) Proposals concerning increase (double) the amount of the annual payments for the period from 1960-1964;
- (14) Report of the Executive Committee on adopted resolutions;
- (15) Selection of members for commissions of the MGS for 1960-1964;
- (16) Selection of the location and determination of the time of the next General Assembly and next Congress;
- (17) Miscellaneous.

Each point of the program is given in detailed form and with indications of the order of voting in accordance with the proposals of the active regulations. As a supplement to the program a report of the Special Commission of the MGS on the discussion of the regulations was presented, which assembled in Rio-de-Janeiro in 1956, when differences of opinion arose as to the question of voting order during the discussion of the problem concerning the induction of new members.

Izv. AN SSSR, Ser. Geograficheskaya, No 3, 1960, pp. 138-142.